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THE JACG NEWSLETTER

THE JERSEY ATARI COMPUTER GROUP

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I'm really pleased at the response from members lately as far as newsletter submissions go. I've been getting articles from a variety of people instead of the same one or two. I even have a couple articles left over for next month. Not that any of this lets the rest of you off the hook. Keep 'em coming! Remember, with no ANALOG and Antic only every other month, we're probably your only monthly Atari resource! (Oh yeah, what's that rag our president writes for? Atari Explorer is still monthly. Check it out!)

Now to save some people some work. I mentioned I would take articles in any format. And I have gotten them in every format. In fact, special thanks go to Joseph Moore, who has probably tried all of them, for being persistent in getting his articles in on time. And last I heard, he didn't even have a computer!

Anyway, for those people who provide me with hard copy (printed material), I notice many of these good folks go to very painstaking methods to try and duplicate the newsletter's double column format in their submissions. The good news for these folks is that it is really not necessary. If all I have is a printed output, I always re-type it anyway and I really don't care if it is double column or not. So go easy on yourself!

DAVE

IN THIS ISSUE ...

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Next Meeting:

February 10, 1990

Noise from the President

A happy New Year to all! I hope that 1990 has plenty of JACGing and ATARIing in you respective agendas. Our membership hovers in the 130's, and our treasury remains healthy...but who knows what ATARI will or will not bring in 1990.

At the last meeting there was some confusion relative to demos. For over a year now it has been the EXCLUSIVE domain (sounds like D & D!) of the 8 and 16-bit vice-presidents to set up demonstrations for their machines at the monthly meetings...not the president. A call to the president the day before the meeting that someone is available to do a demo probably won't "cut it" unless there is extra time. Now this isn't necessarily bad, it is good to have someone waiting in the wings in case of absenteeism, or the availability of extra time. And it is very healthy to have more than enough enthusiastic volunteers...let's just schedule in advance.

For you ST afficianados, "BLITZ" (both regular and turbo versions) has been uploaded by yours truly, to the BBS...if you can't find it, get after the sysop(s) to make it available. I have also given the file to John Dean to make available as part of a Disk of the Month. If you have been following my Megafile-30 trials and tribulations...ATARI exchanged my unit with 1600 plus marked bad sectors with a new unit, which is running fine. If any of you have experienced a plethora of marked bad sectors using ATARI's latest (June 1989) Hard Disk Utilities, please contact me...as ATARI is interested.

For you 8-bitters, I would like to announce the release of 150 new titles of software...but I can't...sorry. The size of ANTIC is probably a good indication of commercial interest in the 8-bit ATARI computer. Now, that is not to say that many of US are not interested in 8-bit ATARI computing; however, we are more and more being left up to our own devices. An updated PD or shareware title here, maybe a new game cartridge there; or maybe a close-out bargain here or there. That's about it. I saw a question on software available for the XEP-80 (ATARI's 80 column "card") up on the JACG BBS the other day. The only commercial software that I've seen for it have been seen for it have been Atariwriter 80 (from ATARI), and TurboWord and TurboFile (both reviewed in ATARI EXPLORER) from MicroMiser). I have also seen a couple of *PD/Shareware terminal programs for it.*

By the way, there is always the ATARI EXPLORER to replace ANALOG. Not with a disk subscription, but it does cover both 8 and 16-bit machines...look at the most current issue at many computer stores and news stands. That is, if you're not one of the lucky ones to get one as a door prize!

This brings up another item. I hope those *who have been attending our monthly meetings* are cognizant of the improved quality and quantity of the door prizes. Hardware, software, books, magazines and gadgets. For those of you reading this who don't normally attend, please don't come JUST BECAUSE we have neat door prizes, please come and participate, and in doing so reap the benefits of JACG membership, a minute portion of which is the chance for some free "goodies". I continue to come across people who could *benefit from an ATARI user group...most not* only do not know of the JACG, but know nothing of users groups.

It has been brought to my attention that the Newsletter lacks a "For Sale" section. It had been a fixture in the past, and I'm sure if **submissions for such were given to Dave** Arlington, he would be able to find the space. I think that it may be due to the success of the pre-meeting flea market that the need for a "For Sale" section has been minimal...any submissions out there?

Keep on ATARIing....more from the prez next month.

WORKING ON MS-DOS FILES WITH YOUR ATARI 8-BIT!
by Dave Dvorin, JACG

Welcome to the first of a three part series on working with MS-DOS files on your Atari 8-bit.

The purpose of this series is to show you how it is possible to work with files from your favorite MS-DOS spreadsheet, database and/or word processor (this includes 1-2-3, dBase and WordPerfect) on your Atari 8-bit and conversely, how you can use files from your Atari 8-bit spreadsheet, database and/or word processor (this includes Synfile+, Syncalc and AtariWriter Plus) on your MS-DOS machine.

This does not mean you can run 1-2-3 on an 8-bit Atari. It will not work. However, it is possible to transfer a 1-2-3 data file to your 8-bit and use SYNCALC on it.

Part One of this series will explain computer files - what they are, the different kinds and how they are used.

Part Two will cover the software and hardware requirements in order to transfer files from one machine to another.

Part Three will illustrate examples on how to transfer data files to and from:

- o 1-2-3 and Syncalc
- o dBase and Synfile+
- o WordPerfect and AtariWriter Plus

Let's get on with...Part One: Computer files...

At the lowest level, computer files are a collection of 1's and 0's stored on a media. The media can be a floppy disk, a hard drive, a CD-ROM, an optical disk, a cassette tape or any other storage device. The 1's and 0's are linked together in a logical order that separates them from other 1's and 0's of other files. Each 1 or 0 is a bit. Bits that are grouped in eights, called bytes, are converted by the computer to a single character via a table called an ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) table.

A representative list of various types of files with their common file extenders are:

- o Documentation (.DOC)
- o Configuration (.CNF)
- o Graphic (.PIC)
- o ASCII (.TXT)
- o Database (.DBF)
- o Worksheet (.WKS)
- o Source (.SRC)
- o Compiled (.CMP)
- o Linked (.LNK)
- o Compound (.CMP)
- o Binary (.BIN)
- o Object (.OBJ)
- o Executable (.EXE)
- o Command (.CMD) or (.COM)
- o Batch (.BAT)
- o DIF (.DIF)

Even though there are many kinds files, they basically fall into two catagories:

- o Data files
- o Program files

Program files contain instructions to the computer. They differentiate from one another by the language that was used to create them. For instance, an ATARI BASIC program file cannot run unless the BASIC used to create it is loaded into the computer either with the cartridge or by an ATARI BASIC compatible disk based language (i.e. Turbo BASIC).

Program files can also be machine specific. For instance, a program may only run on an Atari machine if it utilizes a unique characteristic of the Atari.

On the other hand, data files contain information to used by program files. For example, the

telecommunications program EXPRESS! by Keith Ledbetter looks to a configuration file called CONFIG.EXP for certain parameters. Data files are created either by a program or a user.

Other examples of data files are ASCII and DIF files. An ASCII file is a file that contains nothing but text. There are no formatting codes embedded. They are generally created by editors and wordprocessors. A DIF (Data Interchange Format) file is a file that describes data in fixed lengths. This type of file became popular because it was used extensively by the first spreadsheet program Visicalc back in the pioneer days of personal computers. Today, DIF files can be used with both spreadsheets and database programs.

It is through the use of ASCII and DIF files that we will be able to accomplish the goal of using MS-DOS files on an Atari.

Next time, we will examine the software and hardware requirements to transfer information from one machine to another.

FROM HERE TO THERE
by Neil Van Oost Jr., JACG

Well here I am again, continuing with picture print programs and what to do with those masterpieces. But before I begin, I just want to let all of my fellow "Picture Junkies" out there know that when I sit down and start one of these articles, "I never know just where I will wind up!". So anyway here goes.

As I rummaged through my desk drawer the other day looking for something that, of course was not there, I stumbled across a program called "SNAPSHOT". Snapshot was written by Richard Q. Fox for Joy Fox Productions and bears a 1985 copyright. For those of you who don't recognise the name Joy Fox, please take a tour through the pics on Genie and CIS in the 8-bit section. Some of the best pictures I have ever seen that have been done on an 8-bit Atari, have been done by Joy Fox.

Some of the "Snapshot" features are the ability to convert between:

COMPUTEREYES
FUN WITH ART
GRAPHICS MASTER
MICRO ILLUSTRATOR
MICRO PAINTER
VERSAWRITER

The program prints in more than 50 colors, if you own an Okimate 10 and in true grey scale on Epson compatible printers. You can change colors on the screen with a joystick or touch tablet when you want to enhance a color for printout purposes. Also you can print in normal or double density on Epson and Epson compatibles and as an added feature you can access the directory of your disk without having to go to DOS.

If you are interested in this program, you might try writing to Joy Fox Productions, 1364 Campbell St., Orlando, FL 32806.

Another picture print program you might want to have a look at is Picture Plus 3.0, by Chet Walters. This program was sold from the Antic library, so it might still be avaliable from them.

The documentation for Picture Plus comes on the back side of the disk and can be either read on screen or dumped to your printer. I would suggest dumping it to your printer as it runs 18 pages. Some of the highlights of this program are the ability to use an Epson (or compatible), a Prowriter or Okidata printer. As an added plus the program contains a Print Driver Creator for those of you who do not own one of the above types of printers.

Some of the file types you are able to load are:

MICRO ILLUSTRATOR
MICROPAINTER
SUPER SKETCH
ATARI PAINT
FUN WITH ART

B/GRAPH
ATARI LIGHT PEN
MOVIE MAKER
GRAPHICS 7(LOGO)

The program has many nice features, such as flip, rotate, invert, change colors(rotate lum and color separately), display wave colors, exchange colors, overlay text, reposition the picture, merge and overlay pictures. Along with this is the ability to dump your picture in four colors, Hi or Lo res in four sizes. The sizes are 3 x 4 in., 6 x 4 in., 8 x 6 1/2 in, and 8 x 14 in. you really have to read the documentation and sit down and spend some time playing with it to find out everything it will do.

As an added bonus, if you look on the documentation side of the disk you will find two extra programs. One a picture load program for Micro Illustrator and Micropainter pictures. This is a basic program which you can include in your own basic programs. The other is a picture show program that allows you to have both of the above types of picture file on the same disk, it will decipher which format the picture is in and display it. Well that's it for this month, catch you all at the meeting.

DOORPRIZES FOR DEMOS AND ARTICLES
by Joseph Hicswa, JACG

Members who pick up their newsletter at monthly meetings get a door prize stub. Members who write articles for the newsletter or do demos at the meetings get an extra door prize stub (and an extra chance to win a prize) for every article or demo they do.

The prizes at the December meeting included a 520ST computer (non-working), two monitors, many programs for the 8 and 16 bit computers, magazines, manuals, and disk jackets with labels and write protect tabs. Prizes are donated.

Some members will write an article about or DEMO their prize at another meeting.

8-BIT LIBRARY NOTES
by Sam Cory, JACG 8-bit PD Librarian

Can you believe it - Jan. 1990 - have to start remembering the new year date. Starting the decade correctly we give you the newest Textpro extension called Textpro Plus or v 4.0. I am using it now. Do not ask me to explain the new additions; there are too many. The only one to explain and to get you going is NAME.ME. It appears on the command line as the second file name to show. You can change it for example to:HiBabe; GoToHell; Dreamy; etc. READ the DOCS (six of them). I know there will soon be the usual additions which will be passed on to you. Since it is shareware I request each of you to send a few bucks to Ronnie whose address is liberally sprinked through the docs. As usual $1 has been added to your purchase price to go to Ronnie. Buy it. Spartados X compatibility is great.

Just to beat the drum again. We ATARIANS are fastly losing our information base now that ANALOG is gone. The fine shareware producers are our best source. In my bedding down with ATARI I have watched submissions to the newsletters become insignificant due mainly to the perceived lack of people who are willing to pay for programming. I can recall many excellent young adventurious (all other good adjectives) programmers who now are gone to "The other machines" - not ATARI. I do not see any successors. We have become USERS. Here is where you can help. Get on the BBS's and download new info for the library.

Someone returned disk JACG #198 being unable to use it. Well, it is my fault. In order to give you a lot of material I left all the files in the ARC form. Use our JACG #190 compression disk - the UNARC file to open for reading any file. If you are going to

download from any of the major BBSs, compression techniques must be used.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with compression, it is a way to reduce the cost of modem transmission by reduction of file size without losing any byte of info. (ED NOTE: Compression also allows you to download several related files with just one download, reducing the chances of missing the one file that makes the whole set go.) Text files can be reduced by >40%. Programs are less reduced. If you have a hard disk, use compression. If you have a number of like files, use compression. Bob Puff (SHAREWARE) has made one of the best ARC and UNARC files around -JACG #190-. Those who use SPARTADOS X have the best. If you want a very close emulator of MSDOS get SPARTADOS X and learn how the big boys work.

Recently, one of our members wrote a fine article (please write more) about his troubles in getting two major files - BOBTERM and MYDOS 4.0. Both are in our 8-bit library for those of you whose interest was piqued, JACG #196, JACG #184. Ask any of us who go on the BBS the best modem program and we will say BOBTERM. (ED.NOTE: There are probably a few DeTerm and Express fans who might debate that last claim!) Get it. By the way, his article is an excellent example of what your library goes through each month.

JACG #201 has the latest listing of GEnie files available for downloading. There are two types of listings. One is a short form with a single line for each file. NOTCE the latest is on top. The other has a lot of pertinent info about each file to entice you to download. Each one shows the number of requests for downloads. Also part of the first listing (GENIEDEC) shows the GEnie structure. Note: M665 at any GEnie prompt will put you in the main 8-bit screen. The easiest way to make a printout of these files is to go to DOS and the copy command. D1:filename,P: is the usual ATARI DOS format. Unfortunately, you will not have as much info because the disk is in single density. Compression and double density would have roughly tripled the info on the disk. Don't forget the library needs your downloads; JACG needs your support.

ANALOG #79 December 1989 is the last disk issue. Well done too! Are we subscribers going to take this laying down. Here is a chance, if ANALOG doesn't give us our money back, for a good lawyer to put in a class action suit as a service to the ATARI community. Remeber we have a complete set (7-79) of ANALOG disks for sale at $1 apiece.

ST DISK LIBRARY
by John H. Dean, JACG ST V.P.

New disks are always being added to the JACG ST Disk Library. Let me tell you about them. If you want any of them, they are available through our mail Order Librarian. They cost $5.00 each, including postage, if you are a member. Non-members can purchase them at $6.00 each, including postage. Send your order to:

Bill Garmany Jr.
13 Wellington Road
Livingston, NJ 07039

Of course, you can get any of them for only $4.00 at the meeting, if you are a member of JACG.

<u>**OCTOBER 1989 DISKS**</u>

JACG_LIB.146 contains 'My Friend Max' which was a hit when I demo'ed it at the October meeting. You control his digitized face and make him speak through the ST with a synthesized voice. This disk also includes many of the 'Quick' utilities written by Darek Mihocka that help you speed up your ST.

JACG_LIB.147 is a utility disk with ASCIIVEW.PRG which views/prints text files, AUTOTIME.PRG used with JCLOCK8D.PRG to read and display time from the GEM clock, PINHED12.PRG which

will reduce the time spent 'booting' programs, and QMENU.PRG, a system for easy APPL execution. Also on this disk is RENAME.PRG for putting ASCII characters in file names, SCRDMP24.PRG to screen dump to 24 pin printers, SCRNSAVE.PRG to turn off the screen when computer is idle, and SET_TIME.PRG to set the hardware clock. SHELWRIT.PRG can be used by programmers to call other programs as necessary, TAB142.ACC is a desk accessory Address Book & Telephone Dialer, and VOLUME.PRG reads and/or changes the Disk Volume Label.

JACG_LIB.148, another Utility Disk, includes the Double Click shareware DCCLK33 and STUFFER utilities as well as a mouse accelerater, virus killer and SUB_CAL.PRG, a subset of EL_CAL, the mathematician's calculator.

JACG_LIB.149 contains a lot of Print Master Icons gathered from JACS, Novatari and 8-bit Print Shop sources. It also includes a program to display and print PM Icons. Also on this disk is DESKMG25.PRG, an update of the program on disk #116 which lets you select the .PRG, .ACC and .INF files on bootup. Also, PACK.PRG and UNPACK.PRG. These programs will let you pack programs into a smaller space on your disk, yet they will still run perfectly. Try it! You'll like it! If you don't, UNPACK.PRG will let your restore your file.

JACG_LIB.150 has a neat puzzle game, PENTIMO.PRG in which you try to arrange 5 odd shaped pieces into an overall rectangular shape. This game comes to us from Germany, translated into English. ARCSH199.PRG is an update (6/89) of ARCSH197 found on JACG_LIB.122. RECOVER.TOS is an utility to help you recover damaged files, and SI_RAM.ACC is updated to include C-P drives.

JACG_LIB.151 is an application disk with several forms of databases. One of them, DHANDL13.PRG, is a full featured database, including a mail merge feature. There is also a shareware ($5.00) program to help you write a will.

JACG_LIB.152 is a statistical Application disk BSTAT.GFA. This is a full fledged statistical program, with graph capabilities.

JACG_LIB.153 is a Game disk with an excellent bat-ball game from Germnay. It plays in all resolutions.

<u>NOVEMBER 1989 DISKS</u>

JACG_LIB.154 Aegis Animator has been released to the public domain. and this disk contains the complete program, with Docs from Antic, along with animated demo screens.

JACG_LIB.155 contains floppy and hard disk utilities, including Atari's most recent (11/89) Hard Disk Utilities and Maccel2, Turtle and Unturtle, Terrapin, Pinhed13 and Folder100 programs.

JACG_LIB.156 is a Game Disk with HACMAN, PENGO, TREASURE and BOG. Hacman is similar to good 'ol Pacman, Pengo is a simplified, but good, clone of Dungeon Master, Treasure is an action game, and Bog is word finding game similar to Boggle. Easy to play, but tough to win!

<u>DECEMBER 1989 DISKS</u>

JACG_LIB.157 includes Accessories, Utilities and Games. FMT40.ACC allows you to format SS/DS MAC or ST disks with up to 10 sectors & 82 tracks from the desk top. MULTDEMO.ACC is a demo (lasts for 15 minute) of the Multidesk accessory. AUTOSORT.PRG sorts the programs in your AUTO folder to order. AZT.PRG is a virus fixer for your hard disk, and BLUDTEST.PRG will check your hard disk on boot up for a virus. FOLDERXXX.PRG is another program that will let you defeat the 40 folder limit in the original TOS, by exchanging the XXX with the desired limit on folders (for instance - 100). SWEEP.PRG is patterned after the TV team games where you have to guess what people like, or will do according to surveys made. The

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BATTLECHESS Review
by Joseph Moore, JACG

About a year ago I saw the greatest computer chess game ever, running on a (YUK!!) Amiga. The game was so logical I couldn't beleive no one had thought of it before. Each chess piece was an actual animated character, (real King, Queen, etc.) and whenever a piece was taken, the characters would perform an actual battle sequence, ending in the demise of the taken piece. Each character seemed to have it's own personality, sound effects and style of moving around the board. As the knights moved you could hear the clunking of their armor, while the Queen could best be described as "sultry and sexy", and when the castle lumbered about, the whole board shook.

Each combination of characters resulted in their own unique encounter.For example the castle or rook, which turns into a particularly imposing Hulk-like figure, tends to just flatten the pawn guys, kinda mushes the knights right down into their helmets, and when the rook takes a Queen, he lets out a digitized evil laugh, opens wide, and gobbles her down whole, head first!! Very macabre humor throughout the game.

Besides the animated game in 3-D, you can play with conventional pieces on a 2-D board with overhead view, and the program has all the features and options of the other computer chess games on the market. You can specify the level of play, from novice to Mad Russian Genius, with stops in between, turn off the sound effects, replay or take back moves, and save and replay complete games. The computer will also suggest moves for you if you like.

As I said, the game was running on a (YUK!!) Amiga, and when I inquired about the ST version, the salesman said "No way, Jose, nobody's writing for the ST, wanna buy a (YUK!!) Amiga?". So I don't shop there anymore.

In the interim, the game was released for the IBM, so there was hope. Finally, the ST version was released in June '89, and it's still an excellent game. It comes on two single-sided disks, with a copy program to compress it onto one double-sided, which the authors suggest you do. The docs contain the history and evolution of chess, the legal moves of each piece, and a thorough tutorial. Instead of copy protection, there is a list of twenty or so famous chess games with all of their moves documented. When the game boots up, it randomly asks for a specific move from a game in the docs. That means you have to keep up with that manual, or no boot up. The game can be played over modem, between computer and human, or you can tell the computer to go play with itself, which is always entertaining. It's a way to show off the graphic and sound capabilities of the computer, even if you're not playing the game.

You really have to see and hear this game for yourself, and even if you don't know how to play chess, this is an excellent, fun way to learn. As of October, it's also available for the (YUK!!!) Commodore 64/128. The graphics and sound are watered down a bit, but it's still a very entertaining game. It's published by Interplay Productions, 1575 Corporate Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, and distributed by Mediagenic. Check it out!!

SYNCALC Review
by Joseph E. Hicswa, JACG

For years I collected ATARI programs. Occasionally a program does more than expected. SYNCALC is such a program. SYNCALC requires a 48K Atari computer, a disk drive with blank data disk and a printer.

SYNCALC is an electronic spreadsheet. It was developed exclusively for ATARI by the now-defunct SYNAPSE software and is

available these days from Broderbund.

A spreadsheet is a grid of cells into which text or data are enetered. A command calculates or manipulates the cells. SYNCALC has over 32,600. They can be altered to a users' specs to design forms. eg. Tax Returns.

Cells can be copied and sorted; added, averaged, or find the mean of columns rows, or range of cells. This spreadsheet will scroll up, down, left, or right. The screen can be split as two horizontal or vertical windows. A user may view/work the two section simultaneously.

SYNCALC is for users at home, school, store, or office to organize financial income/outgo, tax and other records. It can be used for a word processor, address directory, check book, diary, calculator, calendar, monetary record keeper, form designer. Other applications include cost estimates, ratios, projections, and analysis.

This versatile program could help out in government offices, police or fire departments, hospitals, laboratories, prisons, etc. I cannot think where it cannot be used unless it is a place without electricity.

SYNCALC has a powerful forecasting and planning capability to see results of alternatives. For example: How much more heating oil would be needed when temperature fell another ten degrees?

Worksheets are saved to disk for easy retrieval. They may be printed whole or in part on your printer.

SYNCALC is easy to learn by following the uncomplicated tutorial. The editors and authors considered novices and pros who teach themselves when they wrote the manual. Photos and examples make instructions clear. The manual is divided into four parts for clear presentation of material.

SECTION ONE: Conatains OVERVIEW of the program and information needed to get started (loaded - booted up). There is also an explanation of function keys.

SECTION TWO: A three lesson, 86 page tutorial takes a novice through step-by-step development of the worksheet. This method explains various features as they appear. Trying these options will familiarize you with the overall system. The routine functions beccome quick and simple.

Expert user commands are displayed on the screen as each function is called for and executed. The novice quickly learns advacned commands to become an expert user. Examples were designed to familiarize you with the more common functions of SYNCALC. They give a good background for further explanations.

The manual encourages experimentation during training. This doesn't damage the computer or program. What may happen is ERROR messages will be displayed -- computer language meaning "Ican't do that." or "I don't understand." An error index offers suggestions how to correct the situation which caused the error message to appear.

SECTION THREE: Has REFERENCE listing the built-in functions, expert macros, as well as advice on data loading and saving, sharing information. SYNCALC works with SynFile, SynTrend, VisiCalc, and AtariWriter among others. There is an error message index and glossary. Hints to save space and improve speed are also included.

SECTION FOUR: The APPENDIX. It contains an index of subjects and page numbers to quickly loacte information. A reference for the advanced users that describes macro commands is also here. Macros are computer shorthand.

Before booting up the program, I knew it was necessary to study the manual. It paid off. To become expert I

just practice, practice, practice. The learning and playing with SYNCALC is challenging and fulfilling. There is no end to what can be accomplished. Every seeion has its own rewards.

An advanced SYNCALC user could set up a spreadsheet to manipulate/calculate one entry of Date, Item, and amount. The set-up would place data in proper categories, for example, Medical, then calculate medical and total expenses. Deduct the amount from Net Worth; refigure tax strcutures so at tax time a completed form is printed for mailing to the IRS to get your rebate or ... All this from single entries. WOW!

In fact, my rating for SYNCALC is "WOW!".

WIZARD'S CROWN Review
by Neil Van Oost Jr., JACG

You can always tell a real good computer game by how much you start neglecting the world about you. Also when the rest of the family starts sticking their heads into your room, wondering just who you are hollering at. Yes, sometimes you just get carried away --- "Take that you dirty bleepard." or "No, no, no -- arwaaa." can be heard issuing from my room late at night. "Wizard's Crown" is just such a game that will do that to you.

"Wizard's Crown" is a role playing game from SSI, with tactical combat. It came out in 1985 and can still be found at Gemini and some of the mail order houses which appear in Antic magazine. The story unfolds as the wizard Kaitar challenges your group of eight adventurers to find "the Crown of the Emperor".

Kaitar speaks, "This then, is the challenge. You have been called to find the Crown of the Emperor. Your path will be filled with unspeakable terrors, ... Few will return to the Gates of Arghan. Those that return with the Crown will receive a reward of great enchantment .... the more swiftly you accomplish your mission, the greater the reward."

In the game you create a party of eight characters. You can assign them their own personal attributes, professions, and skills. There are many monsters to fight and buildings to enter and explore. Monsters may appear at any time in any place. When they do, you can chose to fight a detailed tactical battle or enter into quick combat in which the computer resolves the combat.

There is much loot to be obtained and many, many happy hours to take yourself off into an enchanted magical land. This is one game that I highly recommend. You will have to pardon me now, as I left off in the middle of a battle with huge rats to type this.

RESCUE ON FRACTALUS Review
by Lars Fuchs, JACG

Far and away my favorite game for the 8 bit is "Rescue on Fractalus" by Lucasfilm Games. I run it off disk with a 48k 800. It's not a new game, by any means, but I really love it. What makes this game so much better than the rest is the attention to detail. Its chock full of interesting features that makes it exciting to play again and again.

Basically, the player's mission is to rescue the pilots of interstellar spaceships, who have crashed and are stranded on the forsaken surface of the planet Fractalus. The Air pilot, as the player is called, launches his ship into the atmosphere of the planet Fractalus, and, under heavy fire from Jaggie gun emplacements and flying saucers, attempts to locate and rescue the stranded Spacers. Once he's filled up his Valkyrie Fighter, he kicks in his boosters to lift him into orbit and the mother ship, which recieves the spacers and sends the Air Pilot back into the fray. The Air Pilot has to face succesively hotter areas of the planet, designated by higher launch

levels in the mother ship.

I knew I was in for a good game when I saw the impressive opening graphic, an animated display of the mother ship launching fighters. The animation is accompanied by music and sound effects. In fact, audio is an area where the attention to detail is really superb. The illusion of being in a high tech cockpit is great; the background sound changes as you accelerate or change altitude. The programmers have made excellent use of phase modulation and noise to create a very rich, convincing sonic environment. Perhaps the best use of audio in game that I've played.

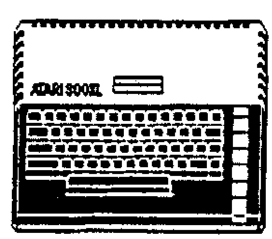
But the audio isn't the only thing that's good. The landscape is fractally generated. I won't go into fractals here (I'm not even so sure that I understand them!), but suffice it to say that the terrain is very realistic. VERY dangerous. There's hardly any flat surfaces; it's all canyons and crevices. A nice feature is that its not generated at random when you fly over it. The same mountain will still be there, with the same gun emplacement on top of it, if you fly away and come back later. It's possible to land on a precipice above pilots so that you can't see them when you land. You have to fly out and U-turn. It's a good idea to be able to see them, because when you rescue pilots, they actually come out of their downed craft and RUN towards you! Nifty animation. But be careful! If the Jaggies get to the Spacer before you do, it'll be an alien that enters your ship and you're a goner.

The flight controls are readable and very useful. For example the altimeter shows not only height above sea level but ground clearance, very important when skimming the mountaintops dodging enemy fire. Another essential indicator is the wingtip clearance, which shows how close the tips of your wings are to the canyon wall. The instrument cluster makes the difference between life or death at higher levels when you encounter night flying. "The nine minute days have driven more than one pilot nuts" says the manual. Flying blind under fire is some of the most hair-raising fun I've had with my Atari.

The game is easy to learn, though precision landing does take practice. The controls are very senstive making piloting, and especially combat, delicate. The toughest part is getting close enough to the pilots before the Jaggies lock on to you. When they get a bead on you they really let you have it. Directional control is effected with the joystick, thrust with the left and right arrows.

Another nice detail is the rescue sequence. After landing close enough to a downed Spacer you must first shut down your drive and defense systems. They emit a lethal field and pilots stay in their wrecks until it's safe. Then they come running, and before long you hear them knocking on your airlock, which you open with a keystroke. Dont open it too soon!

All in all "Rescue on Fractalus" is great fun. Easy to get started, very sophisticated, and hours of fun. My copy came on disk with a well written full color manual, but I think it's available on a cart. If Gemini can't get you a copy order by mail if you have to but GET THIS GAME!



ZMAGAZINE'S Z*NET
The International Atari Newsletter
January 1990 Vol. II No. 1

In This Issue

ZMAGAZINE BECOMES Z*NET ONLINE

by Ron Kovacs and John Nagy

Happy New Year and welcome to the start of the 90's!

January, 1990 marks a major change in the ROVAC magazine lineup. ZMagazine and ST*ZMagazine have been discontinued, and Z*NET ONLINE begins as our sole weekly magazine, available free on over 300 BBS systems worldwide as well as on GEnie and CompuServe.

ZMagazine started as a concept of Bruce Kennedy in late 1985. He began ZMAG in Chicago, Illinois. Ron Kovacs started a New Jersey version in May 1986, and his weekly "Syndicate ZMAG" grew to earn national availability and respect. The original Atari 8-bit coverage slowly grew to include ST material, and in 1987, Ron began to publish ST-REPORT as an ST-only spinoff weekly. Events in 1988 caused Ron to abandon that magazine, and in January 1989, he created ST*ZMagazine as a weekly ST counterpart to the still 8- bit ZMAG.

Now, with Atari releasing new products with a varied interest and user base, we are consolidating our efforts to provide a single full featured online magazine that covers all of Atari's computer and entertainment lines. We really didn't have much choice - we couldn't spread ourselves still thinner and start a Lynx*ZMagazine, Portfolio*ZMagazine or even a TT*Zmagazine! To be honest, the lack of support and news of the 8-bit line has been an important part of this decision as well. While some may accuse us of joining the flight from the 8-bit, please keep in mind that as a news publication, there must be news in order to print news! We have found it impossible to continue to produce a weekly 8-bit magazine without resorting to extensive reprints from the past.

With Z*Net Online, Atari users will be able to get coverage on all Atari products, ranging from the 8-bit through the soon to be released TT, STacy, and PC compatibles. Beginning January 5th, you can see the new magazine on CompuServe, GEnie and the Z*Net BBS. There will be occasional special additional issues dedicated to a single product coverage as the need arises.

The Z*Net BBS has been operating about a month now with SIGs designated for Z*Net User Groups, Technical Assistance, Atari News Discussions, and more areas yet to come. Along with the availability of Z*Net Online Magazine, we are providing all the public domain and shareware files reviewed in both the Z*Net weekly and monthly. An add-on BBS listing allows our BBS carriers to advertise and tell all callers where they can get the latest weekly release in their own area. Running on the MICHTRON BBS software, the Z*Net BBS now offers 300/1200 baud with 2400 coming soon. Call it at (201) 968-8148.

If you are a SysOp of a BBS and interested in carrying Z*Net Online, PLEASE give us a call. There are NO fees involved; the only requirement is that you offer Z*Net every week and do not edit any part of any issue. We will add your system to our list and publish it in our weekly release 4 times a year, and occasionally in our Z*Net newsletter supplement.

If you are reading this column through a user group exchange and interested in more information about Z*Net and what we can do for your group as part of your newsletter, give us a call at (201) 968-2024 between 3-9 PM (Eastern time) any day. Z*Net started with a few groups, and now we reach Australia, Panama and Canada, with several groups in Europe expected to begin using Z*Net in 1990.

SPECIAL FREE OFFER: Start the new year right... with a free introductory CompuServe Startup Kit that bypasses the normal registration fee AND gives you $15 free online time credit! Z*NET readers can get one by sending your name and address to Z*NET/ROVAC Industries, P.O. Box 59, Middlesex, NJ 08846.

GIVE A HAND: Z*Net presents a tremendous amount of information each year. We could use help in writing, research, and production. If you have experience writing for your local club and can participate in Z*Net on a continuing basis, call us NOW. We can put you to work right away.

Thanks for reading the Z*Net family of products... they are a labor of love, dedicated to supporting the users and clubs. ●



● Z*Net is a monthly newsletter supplement produced by Rovac Industries, Inc. It is available in newsletters of registered Atari user groups. Z*Net and Rovac Industries, Inc. are not affiliated with Atari Corporation.

● Z*Net is produced on an Atari Mega ST4 using Calamus Desktop Publishing software. This publication was printed on a Hewlett-Packard DeskJet printer and reproduced by user groups. Artwork and logos have been produced on the Atari ST using Easy-Draw, Touch-Up, and VIDI-ST Video Digitizer.

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Z*Net Newswire...

ATARI NEWS

Recently appointed President of Atari Computer Mike Morand has resigned. Reasons for his decision are not public at this time, but may include an attractive offer from another company. Mike's replacement is DAVID HARRIS, moving from President of the Consumer division at Atari. Harris, a former Atari VP who left two years ago to start his own calculator company, had arranged to license the ATARI name for his calculators. His company was recently merged into Atari's consumer products division. David is a knowledgeable and personable businessman who knows what to expect from the Tramiels.

In November, Artisan Software President, Donald A. Thomas, Jr. was hired by the Atari Corporation to take charge of their Portfolio Phone Sales Department. Don is well known in the Atari community for founding the "Atari Revolution", a grass-roots user supported promotion effort for the ST line of computers. Don held the position of Advertising Manager for the Federated Group and has been a long time Atari user for years before Atari acquired Federated.

Greg Pratt, Atari's Chief financial officer, announced that Atari is looking for other buyers to take over the remaining leases they hold on the chain of Federated Group stores. Silo, an electronics specialty division of the Dixon Group, has acquired the rights and leases to 26 of the Federated stores. These southern California facilities will now bring the total of Silo's current log of stores to 100. Atari has not been able to find a buyer for the troubled chain, so has now resigned itself to selling the troubled stores in smaller chunks.

Atari reported the results of operations for the third quarter that ended Sept. 30, 1989. Net sales for the quarter were $81.4 million compared to $98.8 million for the like quarter last year. A net loss of $5.4 million compared to net income of $.9 million last year. Atari blames R&D expenses plus the costs of bringing new product to the market. The Portfolio, STe, and LYNX should each bring new sales and market share in the coming months. Sales of the hand-held game Lynx have been outstanding, exceeding the available production. Atari expects to produce a million units in 1990. (Commodore announced a loss of over $6 million for the same reporting period.)

Antonio Salerno introduced a new developer/dealer support plan that should help make life easier. Registered developers will be given a list of all currently registered Atari product owners (said to be over 60,000 already databased) and a quarterly dealer list. In order to help get more registrations (20% or less of all owners are registered), Atari will see that new owners get a free 3-month subscription to START, ST-INFORMER, ATARI EXPLORER, ST-WORLD, and maybe more magazines. Developers will also now be offered Atari hardware at 50% of list price. Atari wants developers to reciprocate by providing demos of all software, to be put on CD ROM for every dealer to be able to show and cross index in a database. Charles Cherry, formerly of Antic Software, is the new point man in the TOS PUSH of Atari.

Perhaps the most intriguing item at Atari's COMDEX was not even shown. Scheduled for display and demonstration at the Wednesday evening Developer's social, a true MULTI TASK system for the ST and TT never got on-screen. When (if?) finished and released, this system will give the Atari much the same power under GEM that the Amiga has, to be able to switch between active, running programs. Memory management is not via "partitions", and processes continue even while the program is not "in front". Details remain sketchy, but it appears that the system will be simple, using an AUTO program to patch to TOS.

DESKSET II, a high end publisher from Atari, is expected to reach a very limited but appreciative audience. While it can ONLY print to the Atari Laser (which is now being shipped bundled with DSII instead of Ultrascript) and a Linotronic/Compugraphic typesetter. While that sounds odd, consider that the interface, Atari system, and software will cost under $5,000 while the IBM counterpart is nearly $30,000!

The FCC has finally passed the Atari STACY Laptop Computer for U.S. distribution. However, the type acceptance is as a CLASS A device, which is a designation for business and industrial use only. This means that Atari cannot sell the Stacy as a consumer device at this time, but will be able to market it to the largest and loudest group currently clamoring for it - professional musicians. Stacy will be shipping by mid-January to anxiously waiting music stores across the USA, according to Atari sources. The "Type A" rating is much more forgiving than the "Type B - Computing Device" acceptance that will be needed before regular consumer/computer stores will be able to market the computer. Atari plans to continue the efforts to obtain the more favorable type acceptance, even if some re-design of the Stacy becomes necessary. Possible changes include incorporation of the STE design, which is cheaper to manufacture and uses fewer parts, while offering added palette colors and digital stereo internal sound. If this route is taken, expect a revised Stacy to finally make it into the consumer channels as late as mid 1990. Of course, you can buy one from a music store until then!

In third-party Atari news, FONTVERTER allows the conversion of outline fonts between PageStream and Calamus desktop publishing packages. Users will now be able to use the exact same font outline with both packages. To use the FONTVERTER software, a font editor will be required in the destination format. What that means is to convert a PageStream font to Calamus, you will need the Calamus font editor. FONTVERTER is $39.95, MegaType, PO BOX 645, South Bend, IN 46624

A new version of the VIDI-ST software is available. Computer Games Plus is offering version 1.28 now to registered VIDI owners for $12. The VIDI system is the most advanced and fast real-time video digitizer for the ST. The new software allows saving an entire sequence of frames for animation, as well as other improvements. CGP+, 1839 East Chapman, Orange, CA 92667, (714) 639-8189.

LEKO LEKO is a light processor for the ST, designed for use in the theatre. It is analogous to a word processor with COPY, MOVE, EDIT, VIEW, DELETE, ADD ALL electrics, booms, and lights. Leko Leko can position lights on electrics, front of house, booms, ladders, etc. and can save entire schedules including macros for lighting control and print scripts and diagrams. Using LEKO LEKO, it takes 2 hours to design a show that used to take 10 hours. Selling for $150, LEKO LEKO is available from Water Fountain Software, 13 E. 17 St., NY NY 10003, (212) 929-6204.

STAR COMMAND for the ATARI ST has a software virus present in the code. Electronic Arts, the publisher of the title, has recalled the product ... Please contact ELECTRONIC ARTS at 1-800-448-8822 for assistance in returning STAR COMMAND for replacement or for information.

Continued...

⇨ Michtron is running a Clip Art contest to help introduce it's Fleet Street Publisher Version 3.0. Users can enter by uploading GEM Metafiles and IMAGE files to the Michtron area of the GEnie Telecommunication system. Details are available online, with three ways to enter. Original art, plus most .GEM and most .IMG files uploaded will each have awards in three levels for a total of nine winners. Fleet Street 3.0, Hyperfont, and free GEnie time are the prizes. The contest will end January 31st.

EUROPEAN NEWSWIRE:

⇨ WORLDS FIRST ST LINOTRON BUREAU: Signa Publishing has installed a Linotype service in Station Road. Any Calamus or Outline Art document can be sent on disk to Signa for Linotron output, with resolution of 1270 dpi or 2450 dpi on high quality paper or film. A modem service will be established in the near future. Signa can be reached at 0252-341600.

⇨ Atari UK sponsored a 17 date UK tour of female vocalist Julia Fordham. Fordham appeared at the PC Show earlier at Atari's Music stand. Atari was present at each location showing off their business and entertainment hardware and software.

⇨ IMR has released an RGB distribution amplifier called Multidat-ST. This device is targeted at applications in public information systems, advertising systems, shopping centers and classroom teaching to name a few. The amplifier allows four RGB monitors to be driven by one ST over extended cables.

⇨ Activision, well-known publishers of ST software, have allegedly attempted to prevent the publication of an uncomplimentary review of their "Ghostbusters II" game in a UK magazine. The review was published in the January 1990 issue of "Advanced Computer Entertainment" or "ACE", printed by EMAP. An excerpt: "Ghostbusters II looks like being one of the biggest turkeys you are likely to see this Christmas." Activision's response to the review is told of in a rival publication, "New Computer Express" printed by Future Publishing in its December 9th issue. According to "Express", Activision learned of the content of the review, and demanded that the offending item be withdrawn from publication. EMAP refused, and Activision consulted its lawyers about seeking an injunction to prevent the magazine from being distributed. Both Activision and Columbia Pictures are consulting further with their legal representatives, considering libel suits for defamatory remarks in the review, plus consequential loss of profits. In addition, Activision is (according to "Express") threatening to withdraw its advertising from EMAP's range of publication - reportedly a six-figure sum. Industry observers are calling this "blackmail" and "censorship", and fear it will undermine the objective press.

Industry and the Competition:

⇨ The Commodore Amiga booth was about 1/4 the size of Atari's at COMDEX in November. The Amiga 3000 was postponed until next year, and the 2500 was being pushed in a new 68030 flavor for a mere $4000 plus. Critics of the "NO UPGRADE PATH" from the ST to TT should observe the upgrade offered by Amiga... you can buy the 68030 card alone and upgrade your 2500 for a mere $2,100. That's most of the price for the entire base TT with hard drive and a monitor. And with the TT "upgrade", you get to keep your old ST too!

⇨ A West German company plans to introduce an Amiga Laptop computer in March, 1990. Gigatron says the one-meg clone will cost $2,500 or $3,500 depending on the selected screen. The line will be expanded later to include 2 and 4 meg machines and internal hard drives. Commodore is said to be welcoming the product, signalling their own intention NOT to compete in the laptop market.

⇨ Cyberspace released a keyboard-sized laptop 286 PC, which uses headgear to suspend a postage-stamp-sized screen in front of one eye. A hologram like image appears to float two feet in front of wherever you look. The 286cx displays IBM CGA graphics and runs under MS-DOS. It also has a built in 2400-baud Hayes-compatible modem.

⇨ Mitsubishi announced a 386SX color portable, which displays 640x480 pixels in 256 colors on a backlit florescent screen. An active matrix handles motion. The computer will be available within a year in 286 12Mhz and 386sx 16MHz or 20MHz models.

⇨ An organization of Texas sysops, the Coalition of Sysops and Users Against Rate Discrimination (COSUARD), has rejected a Southwestern Bell Telephone Company (SWBT) compromise offer that would have allowed the company to charge business telephone rates to a targeted group of BBS operators. With this rejected proposal by COSUARD, it appears that SWBT will attempt to impose business rates on all telephone lines with BBS modems attached. Information is available from the COSUARD BBS at (713) 997-1301.

⇨ Allstate, the insurance company, may be the first insurer to reimburse customers who encounter the destruction of programs and data caused by computer viruses. Currently, Allstate offers inexpensive riders to its homeowners and renters insurance to cover other types of damage to personal computers. The new virus coverage is included at no additional cost for anyone currently having in effect a Standard Electronic Data Protection Policy.

⇨ The deadly AIDS (Human) virus was a cover for an expensive TROJAN HORSE in the IBM compatible world during December. An estimated 7,000 computerists received an unsolicited disk in the mail from a London address, claiming to be an AIDS risk evaluator. A warning was inclosed stating that it is illegal to use the program before paying for it ($375, to be sent to a Post Office box in Panama!). However, the disk looks quite runnable, and most recipients have done the natural thing... run the program. While the screens present information on AIDS, the user's hard disk is scrambled. Then, the user is informed that the hard drive can be restored via a program that will be supplied by mail after the $375 is paid. This is simply extortion at the bit level, in addition to feeding off the fear of AIDS. Beware, the ST community may be next... the destructively deranged among us have no need to be original!

⇨ XEROX has begun a $150 million lawsuit against APPLE, claiming that Apple "stole" the Xerox Graphic interface. Industry observers commented years ago on the irony of Apple suing DRI over GEM (used by the Atari ST) when the MAC interface was obviously a run-off of the Xerox Smalltalk/Star interface. While the IBM version of GEM was severely disabled in the settlement between DRI and Apple, the Atari version was left virtually alone, presumably because Apple saw Atari as no threat, or because the Atari version of GEM was actually developed before the MAC, even though Atari bought it later. Should Xerox win, speculation on what might occur in circular liabilities should keep idle minds occupied for at least the remainder of the winter. ●

Nintendo vs. Everybody

The Soviet video game Tetris belongs to Nintendo for all home video systems, a federal judge ruled in San Francisco November 13. Earlier, Nintendo got a preliminary injunction against Atari/Tengen sales of its version of Tetris for home video game systems. The judge then cancelled the trial announcing that she intended to award summary judgments to Nintendo because there were no material factual matters which Atari/Tengen could prove.

Please note, Atari Games is NOT related to Atari Computer Corp. except by ancestry. However, the Nintendo affair has ramifications that affect the entire industry.

Dennis Wood, senior vice president, Atari Games Corp. said, "The court's finding is based simply on a contract issue that has no bearing on the larger anti-trust and patent disputes between the parties related to 'Tetris.' The judge's ruling is confined to 'Tetris' and in no way affects Tengen's ability to market any of its 14 independently manufactured Nintendo-compatible video games. We are confident that we will prevail on our anti-trust and patent infringement allegations against Nintendo when the issues come to trial."

U.S. District Court Judge Fern Smith of San Francisco, allowed Nintendo to file an additional copyright and patent infringement claims against Atari Games Inc. The amended complaint alleges that Atari Games fraudulently and unlawfully obtained a copyrighted Nintendo computer program from the U.S. Copyright Office and used it in the manufacture of cartridges compatible for play on the Nintendo Entertainment System. The suit claims that Atari also attempted to cover up its unlawful use of Nintendo's computer program.

At a Capitol Hill news conference on December 7, Rep. Dennis Eckart, chairman of a House Small Business antitrust subcommittee, released a letter to the Justice Department seeking the inquiry into what Eckart called Nintendo's "significant intimidation in the retail market" to stifle competition. "Nintendo says you can buy our machines but you can only play our games," Eckart said. "I don't think the rules ought to be constructed that way. ...The net result is there is only one game in town. But the simple fact remains that our subcommittee investigation has revealed there is no competition among the competitors," he said. "Our subcommittee investigation has revealed strong evidence of a pervasive pattern and practice by Nintendo to unreasonably restrain competitors from producing, manufacturing and marketing computer hardware and software in the video games industry." Among Nintendo's questionable practices, Eckart said, were use of a "lock-out" computer chip preventing computer games made by others from being played on Nintendo's system. ●

Surviving as an 8-Bit Atarian

by Elliott John Coerper - Osan, Korea

I'm sitting behind my 1200 XL here at Osan Air Base Korea wondering what I'm still doing up (I've been up for 23 hours). We just finished our Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) today and are finally starting to wind down.

Since I couldn't sleep, I decided to work on an article. However, everything was coming out garbage, so I decided to watch wrestling. They were hypeing the "Survivor Series" coming up on the 24th of November, Thanksgiving Day, and that was well over a year old! Boy do I hate TV in Korea, either old and full of military propaganda or foreign and unintelligible. Anyway, after just having survived our ORI and watching the Survivor Series Hype, I decided to write about us 8-bit Atarians, Survivors. Are you a Survivor?

A SURVIVOR ALWAYS DEFENDS

Unfortunately, most 8-bitters usually talk about the disadvantages of owning an Atari computer instead of talking about the numerous advantages. When someone is talking about a 68000, 68030, 8088, 80286, or a 80386 system, we sneak off or remain silent (secretly believing we have an inferior system). Thus, we scare off potential owners with our negativism or with our deafening silence. Regrettably, in either case, we have effectively crippled our User Base, because we failed to defended our system.

By trade I work with MS DOS computers. Because co-workers always see me taking floppies home they assumed I owned a clone. When pressed about what one I owned, I always responded "I have an Atari 1200" (pronounced, one thousand two hundred). Automatically they assumed I owned an ST, "Oh yeah, I heard they can emulate IBM". I never bothered to enlighten them about my modified 8-bit system until...

Last September, Beverly (a fellow office worker) and I were returning to Korea when our 747 broke down in Alaska. We were stuck there three days! When she came to my room and saw my "to go" system, a 130 XE with a modified 1050 drive and a 1027 Printer, she could not believe it. All of it easily fit into a small carry-on bag that I took onto the aircraft. For under $150 (used) I have a portable computer that easily hooks into any TV. She was so impressed, she now owns the same system. Her only complaint was with me, "Why didn't you tell me about this earlier?"

A SURVIVOR LEARNS TO RELY UPON HIMSELF

If you are relying upon Atari to save the 8-bit market, you are sadly mistaken. Atari knows that, in order for them to make it into the 21st century, they will have to rely upon their Mega and MS DOS lines. Atari seems to have forgotten (or chooses to overlook), the 8-bit line. It can be a profitable market, if properly managed.

OK, if I cannot rely upon Atari, then who can I rely upon? Hey, I know, third party companies. Unfortunately, many companies have chosen to bail out of the Atari 8-bit market. Henceforth, learn to rely upon yourself. Learn how to write your own programs. Programs like "Basic Building Blocks" make learning basic a snap. If you are really adventuresome, try learning machine language, Pascal or even "C".

A SURVIVOR KNOWS AND SUPPORTS HIS ALLIES

Learn who supports Atari Computers and support them! Remember when almost all the computer magazines supported Atari? Look who supports us now! Good night, Analog recently stopped circulation. Analog! And I thought they where doing so well. Hey, that only leaves Antic! And it appears they are leaning more towards the Amiga line. Right now, let them know how much you care about your Atari 8-bit. Let them know that we are a FORCE to be reckoned with. Send Antic a check for $28.00 and receive a one year subscription. Hey, if we do not do something now, they might drop the Atari 8-bit and we would be left with nothing.

Is there an Atari user group in your area? Join it and PARTICIPATE. A wealth of information and help is only a meeting away. Think of all the freeware you can get during copy sessions or from their library. Come on, they aren't going to MAKE you work or volunteer to give classes, but at least sit back and enjoy a meeting.

How about software? Have you ever told a mail order company how much you appreciate them carrying Atari software? All it takes is an order and a brief note. Mail really matters! There aren't that many companies who carry Atari software anymore, and there are even fewer who are exclusively Atari.

A SURVIVOR NEVER STEALS

I'm not particularly talking about the programs you copy and never use. Some people just love to say "I have over three hundred disks". I even know someone who has over 500 pirated disks (but he only uses about 10 of them!). What I'm talking about are the programs you use. Do you have the Master for Atari Writer Plus, Synfile Plus or Video Title Shop? What about Print Power, Print Shop or VisiCalc? Shame on you!

A SURVIVOR PICKS UP THE ARSENAL OF FALLEN COMRADES

(but never pries them away)

During the past three years here in Korea, I have purchased or acquired twelve different Atari systems. Only one, my first, I paid more than $140 for. For example, I just purchased a 130 XE with an Indus GT drive, two bat handle joy sticks and about 30 disks (10 masters) for $125. This is about the normal price I pay. Remember, the price is dramatically different when you're purchasing compared to when you're selling.

You might be wondering, do I really need an extra system? No, but I will find someone who does. Whether it's the neighbors kid, or someone who doesn't have a lot of money but wants a computer, I know eventually I will pass it along.

You'll be surprised by some of the people who need an Atari, but are not aware of it. For example, take my neighbor. (Please take him, his kids are always at my house rummaging through my disks!) He purchased a low end MS DOS computer, but did not realize his kids would be playing games on it all the time. He soon found himself fighting with the kids for computer time.

He almost purchased a Nintendo until I suggested he purchase my extra 800 XL and 1050 for $75. No, no, the kids don't need a computer, all they need is a game machine. Just give it a try, I said, then you'll buy. To make a long story short, the kids are now fighting with him to use the ATARI computer. They even purchased a PR Connector so they can share both the printer and the modem.

There you have it. Are you a survivor? Our 8-bit system has made it through the 1980s and hopefully they will make it through the 1990s. If this is going to happen, Atari owners need to spread the word about our excellent computers. We control our own destiny.

Well, good luck, and don't forget: talk up Atari Computers. Our survival is at stake. ●

The Club Room: Publishing a Multi-Users Group Newsletter

by Jim Chapman, PSAN Coordinator

*[Editor's note: Z*Net asked Jim to write about putting PSAN, one of the country's best collective newsletters, together. His description may help (or scare!) others who are considering joining several groups together into a combined magazine. It is an effective way to provide a better product at a lower cost... if you find the right people!]*

Ahhh, done at last, and I can now look forward to a full night's sleep! It's 5:30pm on December 1st and we've just finished mailing out nearly 700 copies of the December issue of the Puget Sound Atari News (PSAN). Now all I have left to do is deliver three or four newsletter packets to nearby stores and users groups, complete and send out the Z*NET distribution form, and make archival copies of this month's articles/graphics/DTP files from the hard drive onto floppy disk. Thus, my 50 to 100 hours of monthly newsletter work are nearly finished... And I can start preparing for the next month's issue while I catch up on my other club duties and family responsibilities (in a more leisurely manner, of course)... But wait, maybe I'd better first explain what PSAN is, and how I came to be so deeply involved in it's production.

The Puget Sound Atari News is a 48 page, monthly, glossy-covered, magazine style newsletter now cooperatively produced by thirteen Atari computer users groups located in Washington State, British Columbia, Nevada, and California.

PSAN began in the Fall of 1984 as the combined newsletter of three Seattle area users groups. The first issues were simply three separate newsletters stapled together and bulk-mailed to save postage. My role then was to help with the labelling and do the mailing (a piece of cake).

A year and a half later I stepped forward to become the 'unofficial' PSAN coordinator (publisher) in an effort to keep the then-failing newsletter alive. Now I was printing portions of the newsletter, doing paste-ups/final editing, and more (while retaining all previous duties, of course).

In early 1987 I offered to print the other club's newsletter sections in an effort to standardize page quality and formatting... and soon I found myself editing all PSAN article input! Shortly thereafter, it seemed logical to adopt a true magazine format. Next, a glossy cover was added (to everyone's approval); and finally in February 1988, I took the desk-top publishing plunge. Suddenly, my newsletter workload seemed to double! So, when 1989 finally rolled around, I thought I might just as well volunteer to become the 'official' PSAN honcho - everyone was looking to me to make the necessary decisions anyway!

With the June 1989 issue we switched to a new printer (offering lower prices and better bindery) and added Z*NET (which, I might add, very nicely rounded out the content of our publication). This brings us up to the present.

The Monthly Schedule

Input deadlines (for both articles and ads) are usually set around the middle of the month preceding publication. As we usually have forty or more articles (including Club News submissions) each month, I'm darned happy if I can finish the desk-top publishing layout within one week! The most difficult part of this process is finishing up the final few pages and making everything fit. This final layout is made more difficult because time is becoming very critical - I've got to get the completed newsletter laser printed and to the print shop on the scheduled day/time!

Layout completed, I hurry to my friendly Atari computer store (Butler's Computer's - a 30 minute drive) to do the actual laser printing. (No, I don't have my own personal laser printer! But one day....) If all equipment is functioning properly and my DTP layout is near-perfect (a rare occurrence!), my work here will be be completed in less than two hours. Then it's off to the printer, a small 'mom and pop' printing/copy business. They 'officially' require a full week to print, collate, bind and trim the 800 copies of our newsletter, but in a pinch they can finish- up our job in as little as three days by working overtime!

The final production step is the mailing. This is usually accomplished in a single day - it only requires about 8 to 10 man hours! On my way to get the completed newsletters, I pick up the completed mailing labels from Cindy, our database person. At the printer's I pack the four over-stuffed boxes (about 200 pounds total) of newsletters into my car. Then, it's off to Bruce's house to label and sack the 600 bulk mailed newsletters and to package-up the other 120+ which must be mailed individually. We work fast because I still have to get everything to the Post Office before the 6pm closing time - or lose another day.

Phew! Aside from a few administrative tasks, I've finished with this month's PSAN. Now, while mulling over tentative ideas for the next issue, I can sit back and admire the fruits of our collective labor... and feel good about being an Atari enthusiast!

How PSAN Succeeds

PSAN is organized/controlled by a Letter Of Agreement. Participation is open to any non-profit computer club whose purposes includes education and improving computer literacy. All participating clubs are equal owners of the newsletter and share the expenses at an equal rate based on the quantity of newsletters received/mailed each month. Controls are also in place to insure that critical or sensitive matters (such as publication name, budget (cost) limits, fiscal agent, spokesman, restrictions, etc.) are decided only by unanimous agreement of the participating clubs.

Rules and regulations, however, are not enough. More important is the attitude and actions of the principals involved. We have strived to be an association of friends with common interests in Atari computers. Our focus is on helping each other and promoting our mutual interests in computers. This caring, sharing, and cooperative approach has created a trusting atmosphere that allows us to function rather efficiently with minimal conflict. In fact, I can't recall ever having any serious disagreements with any of the current PSAN groups! More importantly, mutual involvement makes the magazine stay personal to each group in it.

PSAN also has a core of dedicated and hard-working contributors whose unselfish and supportive efforts month after month make the newsletter possible. (Obviously, we can never have too much of this!)

WEAKNESSES? You bet! Costs are higher than we'd like. We never seem to have enough on-time article input. Newsletter print quality is a never-ending struggle. The whole operation is excessively dependent on one person. And more.....

Obviously there are good arguments as to how our efforts might be better directed elsewhere or reasons why we shouldn't work so hard. But, in my mind, this newsletter is part of our mutual 'life force'; take it away and we lose something, and become collectively weaker. For my part, I plan to continue the effort; it's great having the opportunity to be productive, a little creative, and receive an occasional 'atta boy'!

[Jim will be happy to talk to anyone considering starting a combined newsletter effort. Whether he'll be talking you IN or OUT of it is up to you! (206) 566-1703] ●

Alice Amore's ST SHAREWARE SURVEY

Again this month we feature some of the best Shareware programs available online. You can find these files on CompuServe, GEnie, the Z*Net BBS (201-968-8148), or on countless other BBS systems. Remember, just because you get them free, don't keep using them without sending your support/registration fee! Support Shareware and it will keep supporting us!

DESK MANAGER 2.7

Filename: DESKMG27.ARC, Program Type: Boot Utility, Version: 2.7, Programmer: Charles F. Johnson, Registration Fee: $15.

DESK MANAGER, which resides in your AUTO folder, performs a variety of useful tasks automatically. Among other things, it will let you:

+ Load the correct DESKTOP.INF file for your preferred resolution.
+ Choose which AUTO programs to load.
+ Choose which desk accessories to load.
+ Choose any ASSIGN.SYS file.
+ Use the mouse to select files.
+ Display a .SPC picture (color) or a D.E.G.A.S. .PI3 picture (mono) at boot-up.

Setting up DESK MANAGER is easy. Create a folder (within the AUTO folder) to hold a DESKTOP.INF file for each resolution, plus all ASSIGN.SYS files. (The important part of the ASSIGN.SYS filename is the ".SYS" part. You can call the rest of the filename whatever you wish, making it easy to select the right .SYS file for whatever program you're planning to use.) Then copy the DESK MANAGER program to your AUTO folder and run the program. You will be asked a variety of questions which will then be used to customize DESK MANAGER to your needs. You can decide on:

+ How long to hold the boot picture on the screen (between 0-9 seconds).
+ A "timeout length". Within the number of specified seconds, DESK MANAGER will continue to the next task if you don't hit a key.
+ Yes/No to ringing a bell when your input is needed.
+ Yes/No to "run or bypass" the selection screens at boot-up time.
+ Definition of a "hotkey" to toggle between "run and bypass" when booting.

Next, you will be prompted to save your configuration. Although the config is saved to the DESKMG27.PRG file itself, you can change the config at any time by holding down the HELP key before the program runs.

Once the program is running, you will be given a very detailed account of what's happening at all times. First you are shown the names of all the AUTO programs you are running. You can use the mouse or the RETURN key to select or deselect files. If a GDOS.PRG is found, you'll now be able to select the proper ASSIGN.SYS file to match the application you'll be working on. Next, make your selection of .ACC files from the main directory of your boot disk. Although the ST will hold only 6 .ACCs in memory at one time, DESK MANAGER will show you a maximum of 128 .ACC files from which to choose. Every file with an .AC? extension will be on the list. If you try to select more than 6, a bell will sound as a gentle reminder.

Throughout this entire process, you can usually go backwards through the menus by hitting the BACKSPACE key. You can hit the HELP key to get more information, or hit the UNDO key to exit the program.

DESK MANAGER 2.7 is the solution to the boot dilemma. It was written in 68000 assembly language, and takes up less than 10K of disk space.

ARCIT 1.13

Filename: ARCIT113.ARC, Program Name: ARCIT, ARCIT SHELL, Program Type: Utility, Version: 1.13, Programmer: G. A. Szekely, Registration Fee: $10.

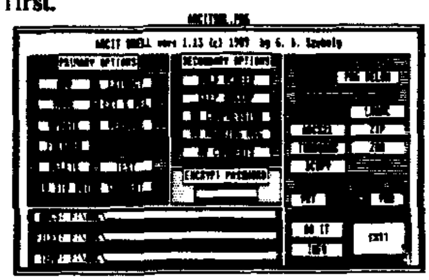
ARCIT 1.13 contains utilities which make light work of ARCing, deARCing, and whatnot. The ARCIT 1.13 package has been nicely updated to work with a variety of compression/expansion formats including ARC 521, TURBOARC, LHARC, DCOPY, ZIP and ZOO.

ARCIT SHELL, which is included with ARCIT, is a separate program which can be used as a front end for all the ARCIT utilities, thus eliminating the need for typing on command lines. Just point and click.

Among the primary options available on the ARCIT SHELL menu are add, move, update, freshen, delete, extract, extract and delete, verbose listing, list, and test. Also, the CONVERT option will easily let you convert an entry to a different packing method, and the TO STD OUT option will copy files from the archive to the screen or printer.

The secondary options are used as "flags" to customize your session. You can click on as many options as you like. There are buttons for hold screen, keep backup, no compression, no warning message, no comments.

An ENCRYPT PASSWORD feature allows you to enter a code word (up to 12 characters long) which will attach itself to the compressed file. VERBOSE and LIST will then be the only commands available unless the correct code word is given first.



Saving the best for last, the most important feature of ARC SHELL is its ability to handle multiple files (or entire disks, for that matter). If, for instance, you want to expand 10 ARCed files in one swoop, ARC SHELL can automatically create a folder for each file, name them accordingly, expand the data and put the files within the proper directory, then delete the original ARCed file. The author highly recommends using a RAMdisk to temporarily hold data.

Other important utilities included with the ARCIT 1.13 package are stand-alone versions of specific ARC SHELL features:

ARCIT is the complete stand-alone ARCing utility which handles multiple files. It is a .TTP file and uses a command line.

DEARCIT has no command line. It is the quickest and easiest way to deARC (and organize) all files in the specified path. Run the program and go watch Dan Rather.

UNARCIT and UNLZZIT use dialog boxes. You'll be able to choose whether or not to delete the original ARCed file. You'll also be able to specify which program to use to actually do the deARCing. If you're running UNARCIT, you can choose ARC, ARC521, or DCOPY. And if you're running UNLZZIT, you'll choose LHARC, UNZIP or ZOO.

ARCIT 1.13 has many other features too numerous to mention here. I urge you to get this file and to take advantage of its many features. And, as always, don't forget to register your copy with the author. ●

The Archive Bit

Compiled by Ron Kovacs and John Nagy

January 1987, Three years ago this month

Atari announces a new line of ST and PC-clone computers at CES, to be called the "MEGA" and "PC" computers with 1, 2, and 4 meg of ram available, as well as a laser printer for $1,500.

Timeworks introduces Word Writer, Data Manager, and Swiftcalc for the ST.

Atari stock stays among the daily most active on the AMEX exchange, trading at over $20 a share.

An 8-bit Atari emulator for the ST begins circulation in rudimentary form, and Atari asks author Darek Mihocka to suppress it due to the inclusion of Atari copyrighted code.

January 1988

The Atari Laser Printer, the SLM804, makes its debut, retailing for $1995.

The long-awaited XF551 disk drive for the 8-bit Atari is released. Unfortunately, ADOS, the new version of DOS that would allow use of the XF551's increased storage capability and speed, is not ready.

The Translator ONE for the Magic Sac from Data Pacific Inc. is released, enabling Magic Sac users to read, write and format true Macintosh format disks.

Atari's video game sales for the 1987 Christmas season were very, very good, selling out of both the 7800 and the new XE Game System.

ANALOG Computing has been purchased by LFP Inc. (Larry Flynt Publications) and will resume publication beginning with the March 1988 issue. ST-Log was also included in the sale and will resume with the March issue also.

OSS Inc. will be merged with (taken over by) ICD Inc.

Sam Tramiel said that domestic sales were strongly affected by the heavy European demands for the ST line of computers, manufactured exclusively in Taiwan--about 80% of St's manufactured in 1987 were sold in Europe. "We never had any product left over to bring to the U.S.," he said.

January 1989, one year ago

MichTron is no longer licensed to sell or service GFA products. Angry that Michtron was selling a competing product, they withdraw their license with them.

Avant-Garde announces PCDitto II in a press release. This hardware PC emulator is expected to be three times faster than an IBM and should be released within the first quarter of 1989.

ST*ZMagazine debuts online at GEnie and Compuserve, joining ZMAG in a weekly news magazine format.

Darek Mihocka releases the pinouts of the Xformer serial cable, which allows 8-bit disk drives to be connected directly to the ST so that files could be moved back and forth between the ST and 8- bit. It is intended for use with the ST-XFORMER, Darek's 8-bit emulator for the ST.

Introduced at the NAMM show is "The HOTZ BOX", designed for Atari production by Jimmy Hotz of Hotz Instrument Technology Systems. The unit is called a MIDI translator, and has sort of a keyboard of its own, although very different from a standard synthesizer.

David Sullivan of Total Control Systems announces that GOE is ready to ship. Meanwhile, Alan Reeve ships the first 50 cartridges of DIAMOND, another graphic operating system that gives the 8-bit an ST-like desktop.

Migraph releases Touch-Up, a major IMG editing and creation application, with a security key to thwart pirating of the product. A Scanner interface is promised for later in the year. ●Z*NET BBS REGISTER

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